

THE CONSEQUENCES
OF
INTEMPERANCE,
SHEWN IN THE
HISTORY OF ONE OF THE MEMBERS
OF THE
MANCHESTER PROVIDENT SOCIETY.
A NARRATIVE OF FACTS.
BY A LADY.

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CONSEQUENCES OF INTEMPERANCE.

As a visitor of the District Provident Society I became acquainted, about two years ago, with the family of Thomas H.—His wife, who it was evident was suffering from anxiety of mind, told me they had once had a tidy house and some neat furniture in it, which was nearly all gone to provide food for the family.—“It is about six weeks,” she said, “since Thomas broke his pledge; he had been nearly six months a Teetotaller. Before he became such, we had been sadly reduced in our circumstances by his habit of drinking, and had little left, and were afraid *that* little would be seized by the landlord for rent due to him, when some of the men in the same shop persuaded Thomas to become a Teetotaller. While he continued so we were very comfortable and happy; but being all sadly run out of clothes, it was as much as we could do to supply what we needed in this way, and I hoped in a while we should be able to redeem our furniture—some of it indeed which you see *was* redeemed by my brother, when Thomas told him he had made up his mind to become a Teetotaller. Since he broke loose he has been drunk every Saturday night, sometimes all Sunday, and often for two or three days more—he is now ill in bed, in consequence of a quarrel he got into on Sunday night”—she added, “I tell you all this, thinking if you would speak a kind word to him it might perhaps do him good.” I said I should much like to see him if it were *his* wish also, and I would call at his dinner hour the following Monday. I went, and found he had been drunk as usual on Saturday and Sunday, and he was ill in

consequence. He desired his wife to tell me, that when he got into a bit better way he should like to see me, for that he really believed I wished well to working people. As Thomas did not get into any better way, he could not make up his mind to say he would see me; but, accidentally, I met with him at home, and we had a great deal of conversation.—He appeared to be a very kind-hearted man, and he admitted that he was doing a very wrong and even a wicked thing, to deprive his wife and children not only of clothes, but of food; for, to use his own words, “they were almost clamm’d.”—I said much to him, I hope kindly, for I felt very sorry for one who could be guilty of such conduct.—We had been seated face to face by the fireside, but he turned his chair round and wept bitterly.—I said, “I am sure, Thomas, we are both glad we have met, and I am sure too that we part friends; but I should be glad if you can tell me that you will make an effort to keep sober till we meet again next Monday.”—Without turning round he put his hand over the back of his chair, (when I stood up to bid him farewell) and gave it me without looking up. He continued very much affected, but did not speak. After this he was steady for some time, and I need scarcely say, great was my joy and my hope. I saw him often, and when I missed calling at his dinner hour he generally left a message for me with his wife. He now gave her almost the whole of his wages weekly; and she being a clever as well as an industrious woman, the house looked very nice and comfortable again, and she began to put a little money into the Provident Society’s Bank. She did not apply her husband’s wages to this purpose, for the children were still poorly provided with clothing; but she earned a little matter herself by making caps, when she could get the work, but these being for persons in her own rank of life, and consequently unable to pay much for them, her gains were not great.—But Mary said,

“sixpence a week will be ready for a load of potatoes or coals.”

Thomas was very happy now that he abstained from liquor.—I sent him the Penny Magazine on a Saturday night, that he might have instructive reading at home, and he could read well.—A Bible was the only book he had, a treasure in itself certainly ; but as Thomas said, and I agree in the remark, a man cannot read his Bible with benefit for a whole day together—and he therefore interested himself in other reading, though by no means I believe to the neglect of his Bible, which at this time appeared to afford him great consolation.—He occupied himself also in teaching his children—poor little children ! they had been sadly neglected by a father very capable of instructing them.

As Thomas had now continued his good habits for some time, both his wife and myself were desirous he should have some clothes suitable to attend a place of worship. We did not venture to purchase any till he had shewn a more steady conduct, fearing they might be disposed of for liquor : but when he expressed a wish to go to worship if he could but muster a suit, his wife said, Mrs. W. has told me she will give us a trifle, and I have twenty shillings in the Provident Society’s Bank, it cannot be more useful than for this purpose.—Thomas seemed impressed with his wife’s kindness, and said he hoped he should make it up to her.—He attended Church regularly for about three months.

Now comes a sorrowful part of my story.—Though Thomas was ready to acknowledge (as indeed he often did) that his health was greatly improved, that he was much more happy than he had been, and that he had every comfort about him, yet he again began to drink. At first he would tell me of these occasional transgressions, and attempt to give some reason for them, and endeavour to excuse them ; but after a while they became so frequent that he ceased to mention them,

though he assented to the truth of the circumstances when his poor wife spoke of them in his presenee, saying, as she sometimes did, "Oh! Thomas, let Mrs. W. persuade you."—He always seemed to listen, but no impression was made. Sometimes he would argue, that beer was wholesome and did a man good. One day he said to me, "you have told me you were no enemy to a man having a sup of beer in moderation." I replied, "you have often promised me you would never be drunk again, and I do believe you were sincere when you said so.—I still say that I am no enemy to beer in moderation; but you know that if you once begin you cannot stop with moderation, and therefore you should keep master of yourself, as you can do when you are sober, and never ought you to take any quantity however small, till you can exercise more self-controul than you appear able to do at present."

Thomas's temper and feelings, which were naturally kind and tender, seemed to harden—he became indifferent to his children, of whom he had been very fond. I suppose his feelings were blunted and his nature changed by this sad habit. And yet though there were times when he could not help feeling that he had been the ruin of his family, his conscience told him this, and he dared not dwell upon the thought, and yet he had not resolution to alter his conduct. Often he would give his wife but two or three shillings on a Saturday night, telling her to provide a good dinner for Sunday.—He had spoiled his appetite so much by drinking, that he could eat nothing which was not strong and tasty.—One Tuesday when I called he had just come in half drunk, and desired his wife to get him some dinner, saying he would then go to his work.—He had been at the public house almost constantly since Saturday, and had not given his wife a penny of his wages—she had not again been able to put anything into the Provident Society's Bank, and a shilling which I had given her

on Monday was all she had had. When he promised he would go to work after dinner, his wife was very desirous to get him some, and she asked him if he had any money left to give her, to purchase something he would like—he answered “*no*.” So Mary borrowed sixpence, and bought some cheese, which she toasted—he was eating this when I came in, and with it the bread which his poor wife had intended for her children’s dinner.—It was all she had for them and herself. Notwithstanding all I had so frequently said to him lately of his unkindness to his family, (and which for their sake I did say, though it was very painful to me to do so)—yet Thomas always seemed to think that I was really his friend; and dirty, and half drunk as he was, thinking he must be very miserable, when he asked me to sit down by him, I complied.—His wife told me with tears, but without any expression of unkind feeling, that he had no money left to buy anything he liked for his dinner.—I was sadly shocked when he took a shilling from his pocket, saying to his oldest child, a boy of eight years old, “Go fetch a quart of best ale from——” (naming a public house in the neighbourhood.) I said, “Oh! Thomas, can you have the heart to send for ale when your wife and children have had nothing from your last week’s wages?” He made me no answer; and indeed although he had asked me to sit down, he never looked me in the face.—After this I continued to see him occasionally, sometimes sober, but more frequently tipsy for many weeks; but I could scarcely look upon him as the same person—his nature was changed, his good, kind feeling gone.

For the sake of his family his master had borne with him longer than he otherwise would have done: for though Thomas was a good workman, yet with such habits he could do no master any credit, or even justice, and he was dismissed from his place. He now said he would work if he had work to go to, but somehow he

still contrived to get liquor instead of seeking another place. At length, however, he met with one, through the recommendation of a friend; and though at reduced wages he might still have earned a comfortable living, could he have conquered this sad habit: but after he had been two or three weeks in his new situation, he was as bad as before.—In going my rounds through the district, I generally called at the house every week.—One day, finding Mary absent from the room where I usually saw her, I called at the bottom of the stairs, and was requested to go up.—She met me at the chamber door in great distress.—I found Thomas on the bed.—This afflicting scene I must ever remember.—The poor man put out his hand and desired me to sit down.—His breathing was very bad—hard and laboured: and cold as the weather then was, he was obliged to have the window open, from an apprehension of suffocation.—He said, “I have wanted sadly to see you, but I can scarcely speak. I was taken ill the night after you were here, Monday, and now it is Monday again, and I am no better but worse. The doctor says, if it had not been for my bad habits of living I should soon have recovered, but he is afraid it will go hard with me: but I have not much pain, except from difficulty of breathing, and I really hope I shall be better. And if it please God to spare me, I will never be drunk again, I give you my word.”—I said, “Oh! Thomas, make the promise to yourself, and I hope you may be spared to keep it, for your life has been very sad both for yourself and your family.”—He spoke highly of his wife, and dwelt on her great kindness even when he treated her so ill.—He had all provided for him, both as to food and medicine, which the doctor approved and recommended; but he died on the eleventh day of his illness—at the age of thirty-four.